

FRA/PCC working group final report

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

At the Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting on 5 November 2012 Cllr Kay Hammond proposed the establishment of a joint task and finish group, made up of Members from the Fire Services Management Committee and Safer and Stronger Communities Board, to look at the relationship of Police and Crime Commissioners to Fire and Rescue Authorities. This paper is comprised of the working group's final report and a summary of questionnaire responses at **Appendix A**.

Recommendation

The Commission is asked to note the content of the report.

Action

Officers to take action as directed.

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Background

1. The LGA's Fire Services Management Committee identified the need to explore the emerging relationships between fire and rescue authorities and police and crime commissioners; with the aim of producing a short report that could be used by fire and rescue authority Chairmen or Portfolio Holders to highlight the wide range of work that fire services undertake which in turn complements the work that PCCs are now responsible for. It is worth noting however that relationships between FRAs and PCCs are still developing and whilst there is great variety in the work that is being undertaken at local level, the task group (and this report) seeks to identify the common emerging themes.
2. Sir Ken Knight's *Facing the Future* report suggests that more can be done by Fire and Rescue Authorities to make better use of resources and makes specific reference to efficiencies being achieved through collaboration with the other blue-light services. In this context it is therefore particularly timely that FRAs could consider how best to work with their Police and Crime Commissioners.

The importance of FRA engagement with PCCs and areas of mutual interest

3. The work of the task group again identified the significant amount of preventative work that Fire Authorities deliver beyond the core remit of 'putting out fires', much of which will be of great interest to Police and Crime Commissioners. This includes diversionary and education programmes for young people, and activity that is successful in reducing re-offending and anti-social behaviour. While many PCCs have a good understanding of the wider preventative work that FRAs undertake, FRA Chairmen and Portfolio Holders may be minded to highlight this work in their discussions with PCCs.
4. FRAs may wish to consider informal discussions with Police and Crime Commissioners when discussing their respective community safety budgets. As outlined above, there are a number of areas of work of mutual interest for FRAs and PCCs and using the limited funding pools available to both the fire and police services may prove to be the most efficient use of resources.

Highlighting the work of FRAs and the fire and rescue service with PCCs

5. The task group also highlighted the role that the LGA could play in raising awareness amongst PCCs of how Fire and Rescue Services have been contributing to making communities safer through their prevention work. The joint Strategic Partnership Board being established between the LGA and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) was felt to offer an opportunity for discussing the work FRAs undertake on the community safety agenda with PCCs collectively. The Strategic Partnership Board could then identify a suitable conference or similar gathering of PCCs at which some of the case studies set out later in this report could be presented to PCCs to demonstrate the value they might get from working with FRAs.

Case Studies

6. The responses to the survey of Chief Fire Officers identified a number of areas where FRAs are already engaged with PCCs to the benefit of both organisations and more importantly to the communities that they serve. These ranged from sharing buildings to joint control rooms to shared staff and senior officers; FRAs may want to consider these and other areas as relationships with PCCs develop further. Some examples of joint working have been included below:
 - 6.1 On **Merseyside** the Police and Crime Commissioner has signed a contract on behalf of the Police to move to a Joint Command and Control Centre for both Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) and Merseyside Police (MP). Although the proposals were already well progressed the Commissioner was able to recognise the benefits and ratify the previous Police Authority decision. This has led to further discussions on the potential for shared services and shared premises across the wider building stock held by both organisations. Additionally the PCC has supported the development of Safe Havens at Fire Stations across Merseyside and in doing so the PCC has recognised the key role that community fire stations have within communities and that they can provide a safe environment for vulnerable people in a time of crisis.
 - 6.2 In **Hertfordshire** the CFO has been appointed as the Chief Executive of the PCC's office whilst retaining his county council role as Director of Community Protection. This new dual role will strengthen existing partnerships between the PCC and the county council and allow for greater sharing of resources and 'back office' functions. With increasing pressure on budgets, both HCC & the PCC have used this opportunity to continue to deliver quality services while achieving substantial savings, the appointment would save in excess of £100k a year between the Commissioner's Chief Executive post and the county council. The intention is to focus on the wider community safety agenda, ensuring that we continue to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Conclusions

7. Overall, and at this early stage, the feedback from Chief Fire Officers is that relationships with their PCCs are developing well and that there are a number of opportunities for joint working that should result in better outcomes for communities and also make the best use of limited resources. Whilst some local issues have been identified, there is confidence amongst CFOs that these can be addressed as relationships with PCCs develop further.

Questionnaire on FRA/PCC engagement

1. The evidence that informs the task group's final report was underpinned by a short survey that was sent to all 46 Chief Fire Officers. This survey was originally sent to the 46 FRA Chairmen, but due to the low level of response it was subsequently recirculated to CFOs. The survey was comprised of three questions, which, alongside a summary of responses, can be found below:

Q.1. What has worked well so far in your engagement with your Police and Crime Commissioner?

2. With one exception, all respondents noted that relationships have been positive so far, with PCCs engaging with all partners both bilaterally and through existing partnership bodies such as Community Safety Partnerships. In some areas the PCC had assumed the chair of the CSP and this had been found to be particularly effective in ensuring early engagement took place which could be factored into developing Police and Crime Plans. Other comments included:
 - Positive engagement built on existing good relationships with the police authority.
 - Many Police and Crime Commissioners have recognised the key role that fire stations have within communities and are keen to use these where possible.
 - In Merseyside the PCC had signed off an agreement to develop a joint command and control centre for the police and FRS and co-location was mentioned by a number of other CFOs as a potential opportunity for further collaboration.
 - There was one FRS that noted there had been no engagement, but this was put down to the PCC focussing on budget issues and it was noted that the PCC's deputy had been engaging with partners.

Q.2. What input would you like into the work of your Police and Crime Commissioner?

3. The general consensus from respondents was that it was too early to answer this question with any certainty. However many FRAs noted that they had been treated as an equal partner in their dealings with PCCs so far and that as this continued they would be well placed to input into the work of their PCC as and when required. The following additional points were also made:
 - There is a need for greater clarity on Commissioners' work plan for the year ahead.
 - Partners need an understanding of how they can support the development of priority areas of work.

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- Working together to identify agreed measures of success and opportunities for shared services would be welcomed.
- FRSs could benefit from discussing the priority setting; this would place a focus on proactive upstream intervention; for example youth engagement activity and road safety education.

Q.3. What do you see as the opportunities for further collaboration in the future and what are the barriers to achieving this?

4. The majority of respondents noted that there were significant opportunities for further joint working, including:
 - Police and Crime Panels provide an excellent opportunity for further collaboration.
 - Joint commissioning is an opportunity for further joint-working and needs to be explored further.
 - Co-location of staff and other resources.
5. A number of potential barriers were also identified, but there was confidence amongst CFOs that these could be easily overcome as relationships developed. Clearly there are significant national issues around reduced funding and these will require collective work to address. Other barriers that were identified include:
 - Issues with differing priorities in some areas, but no significant barriers identified.
 - More work is needed around pooling of resources.
 - Central Government's narrow view of the FRS's role – constrained by the National Framework.
 - Possible tensions around accountability with regards to community safety priorities.

Good practice

In the **West Midlands** it has been agreed that the PCC and FRA Chair will meet twice yearly with the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable to give high level support to joint initiatives. The PCC has agreed to attend a future regional Chief Fire Officers' Association with Chiefs from across the West Midlands Region and the FRA's community safety teams have already engaged with the PCC and his office on a number of occasions at seminars and through direct meetings.

Nottinghamshire's senior officers have met several times over specific on-going arrangements to rationalise their estates. The FRA has also highlighted its youth work to the PCC to show how it is engaging with the young. Joint work is also being undertaken through

the Nottinghamshire Community Safety Trust to reduce reoffending work, which the Fire Service is already engaged with.

Essex engage with their PCC regularly at each Safer Essex Strategy meeting, Strategic Board of the Community Safety partnerships, and have received acknowledgment of RTC reduction work and Youth engagement activities. Essex have also sent a return around the PCC strategy as a FRS which has been acknowledged and have applied for funding in the 2013 -14 budget.

Thames Valley has a complex geography with 18 local authorities and therefore the Commissioner has welcomed the Oxfordshire approach which has enabled him to liaise with a single strategic group – the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership – rather than individually with each of the five district areas plus the county council. The Commissioner attended an OSCP Board meeting shortly after being elected in November 2012 and this was very helpful in starting to build the relationship between Oxfordshire community safety partners and the Commissioner.

Being Chair of the Safer **Cornwall** Partnership the PCC meets with the Peninsula CSP Chairs (CSP Chairs across Devon and Cornwall) on a quarterly basis which provides the opportunity to discuss varying area priorities to try and reach consensus. This will also give the FRA the opportunity to work together when it comes to a more joined up approach to commissioning. Cornwall FRS has expanded its role into a wider Community Safety Service, enabling the CFO to directly engage with the PCC on such issues as ASB, Domestic Violence, Youth Diversion strategies and the night-time economy.

Cumbria has established Safer Cumbria, an amalgamation of all bodies with an interest in criminal justice, community safety, domestic abuse, etc. This has a broad 'direction group' which looks to develop strategy and an officer based 'action' group to make it happen. The PCC is now the chair of the direction group whilst the CFO chairs the action group, with both meeting regularly to discuss related issues. The CFO is also lead officer for the Police and Crime Panel, the body charged with scrutinising the PCC.

Engagement with the PCC commenced in advance of his election in **Suffolk**. The Safer Suffolk Partnership Board (the County-wide CSP) prepared a Community Safety Prospectus for candidates, which set out details of community safety activity in the county. A section of the document was dedicated to the work of the fire and rescue service. This approach demonstrated the breadth of the Service's contribution to the community safety and broader health and wellbeing agendas and, also, illustrated the extent to which the service was integrated into the county's community safety arrangements. The Cabinet Member and the Chief Fire Officer built on this early engagement by meeting the successful candidate soon after the election. This provided an opportunity to expand on information contained in the Prospectus about the fire and rescue service and, also, to explore how the efforts the service could be aligned with the aspirations of the Commissioner, as he started work on preparing his Police and Crime Plan.